

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 9390

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 2979

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

SUMMARY: HAD EXHAUSTING ROUND WITH MARONITES TODAY, SEEING IN ORDER GROUP OF MONKS PLUS REPS OF MARONITE COMMUNITY, MALIK, GEMAYEL, FRANGIE, MORE MONKS AND COMMUNITY AND, FINALLY, CHAMOUN. GEMAYEL BIT ON PLAN, FRANGIE GOES ALONG BUT HAS QUESTIONS, CHAMOUN COMPLETELY NEGATIVE. PROBLEM EMERGING IS FACT NONE BELIEVE THERE IS ENOUGH SECURITY AT THIS MOMENT FOR PARLIAMENT TO MEET AND THAT, THEREFORE, WHOLE PROCESS WILL BE SLOWED DOWN (WHICH MEANS GETTING JUMBLATT EL AL TO EXTEND CEASEFIRE). FRANGIE ALSO WANTS ARMS. END SUMMARY.

1. HAD COMPLETELY PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH GEMAYEL, MALIK AND CHAMOUN. FRANGIE HAD REPORTER AND INTERPRETER (LUCIEN DAHDAH) PRESENT. TALKED TO THEM FROM FOLLOWING POINTS.

2. FIRST GAVE GENERAL IMPRESSION OF TALKS WITH MUSLIM, DRUZE AND CHRISTIANS. SAID I FOUND GENERALIZED DESIRE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE AND A WISH ON PART OF MOSLEMS FOR GREATER POLITICAL RECOGNITION. POORER CLASSES, MOSTLY SHIA, WHILE NOT STARVING, BELIEVE THEY ARE NOT SHARING SUFFICIENTLY IN ECONOMIC PROGRESS. WITH IMAM THERE WAS MORE SORROW THAN ANGER BUT EVEN MOST MODERATE PUSH FOR MORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE POOR MUSLIM AREAS. AS THEY ASKED, I TOLD THEM THAT

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MUFTI WWAS TAKING A HARDER LINE ON RELIGIOUS AND

POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND THAT THEY KNEW HIS TENOR OF THINKING.

3. I TOLD HIM THAT JUMBLATT WAS PREPARED TO EXTEND THE TRUCE IF THE POLITICAL PROCESS WAS WELL UNDER WAY BUT THAT HE HAD GIVEN NO SOLID GUARANTEES FOR THE FUTURE WHICH THEREFORE NECESSITATED FORWARD MOVEMENT SOON.

4. I THEN SAID I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH THEM THOUGHTS WHICH I HAD NOT YET CHECKED OUT WITH WASHINGTON AS I WANTED THEIR VIEWS BEFORE SO DOING. FIRST WAS WHETHER AS A TEMPORARY MEASURE WE COULD GET SOME SORT OF SECURITY INTO THE CITY OF BEIRUT TO PUT A STOP TO THE MINDLESS LOOTING AND KILLING NOW GOING ON. WOULD THEY BE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE FORCES TO A JOINT FORCE WITH THE PALESTINIANS, SAIPA AND ARMY? THE SECOND THOUGHT WAS COULD THEY ENVISAGE THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM ESTABLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE NEW LEBANESE GOVT WHOSE TASK WOULD BE TO ASSIST IN THE REBUILDING OF THE SHATTERED ECONOMY, IN SO DOING ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO THE REESTABLISHMENT OF LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES. I ASKED THEM IN TURN IF THEY COULD AGREE TO THE PRINCIPLE OF THE NEED FOR REFORM.

5. I MADE IT PLAIN TO THEM THAT WE ARE CONCERNED BY THE PLIGHT OF THE MARONITES AND BY THEIR MILITARY DISADVANTAGE. WE THOUGHT THEY SHOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO NEGOTIATE BUT NOT TOO WEAK TO HAVE TO CAPITULATE. I PERSONALLY SAW NO POSSIBILITY OF EITHER PARTITION OR OF A DREAM OF MILITARY VICTORY AS A WAY OUT. THEREFORE, THERE HAD TO BE NEGOTIATION. IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE PALESTINIAN FORCES BE KEPT PEACEFUL AND I DID NOT SEE HOW WE COULD BE HOPEFUL IN THE CONTEXT UNLESS THERE WAS SOUND HOPE FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

6. I SAID IT SEEMED TO ME AFTER ALL MY TALKS IN LEBANON THAT THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO CARRY THROUGH
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THE GENERALLY AGREED UPON PLAN BOTH PROMPTLY AND IN GOOD FAITH. THERE IS NOT TIME LEFT FOR POLITICAL GAMES AND REALITIES HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED. I CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT I REALIZED THAT SECURITY IS VERY MUCH IN THEIR MIND. SO IT IS IN OURS.

7. GEMAYEL'S REACTION. GEMAYEL WAS ENTHUSIASTIC. HE SAID HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO CONTRIBUTE THE

PMALANGE. HE SAID IT COULD BE DONE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE MIXED ARMISTICE COMMISSION (PALESTINIANS, SYRIANS, LEBANESE. HE EXPLAINED HE MEANT A REGULAR LEBANESE ARMY OFFICER. HE GREATLY APPROVED OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM PROVIDED IT WAS A LEBANESE INITIATIVE AND THOUGHT THIS SHOULD BE THE FIRST TASK OF A NEW PRESIDENT. HE THOUGHT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM SHOULD INCLUDE FORCES OF OTHER COUNTRIES WHOS OSTENSIBLE ROLE WOULD BE TO RETRAIN THE LEBANESE ARMY. IN THIS WAY THERE COULD BE AN ECHELON MOVEMENT FROM SECURITY CONTROLLED BY THE MIXED COMMISSION THROUGH SOME INTERNATIONAL FORCES WHO WOULD TRAIN THE LEBANESE AND EVENTUAL ASSUMPTION OF THE LEBANESE OF THEIR OWN DEFENSE. IT VITAL THAT SYRIA BE BROUGHT EARLY INTO THE PROCESS AND INVOLVED THROUGHOUT.

8. GEMAYEL DID NOT THINK THE WHOLE THING THROUGH AS DID FRANGIE AS YOU WILL SEE LATER BUT HE WILL SUPPORT IT UNLESS OTHERS PRESS HARD ON HIM.

9. WE DISCUSSED ON HIS INITIATIVE THE UPCOMING POLITICAL CHANGES. HE WANTS A NEW PRESIDENT, MARONITE NATURALLY, WHO CAN ATTRACT AS BROAD A CONSENSUS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS AS POSSIBLE. HE FEELS THAT A PRESIDENT Elected BY A NARROW VOTE WOULD SOON FAIL. I ASKED HIM IF HE HAD VETOES OF ANY CANDIDATE. HE DENIED THIS SAYING A STRONG CONSENSUS DEVELOPS HE WILL NOT STAND IN ITS WAY. (I HAVE CONSIDERABLE DOUBTS ABOUT THIS AS HE IS PREJUDICED AGAINST EDDE AND WILL PROBABLY MAKE IT KNOWN AS THE CONSENSUS IS WORKED OUT.) HE SAID, AS DID THE OTHER, THAT HE WAS IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH VARIOUS
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POLITICAL ELEMENTS ABOUT THE CANDIDATES.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 9391

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FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

10. IN VIEW OF THE IDEA OF A JOINT FORCE I ASKED HIM WHAT HIS RELATIONS WERE WITH 'ARAFAT. HE SAID THAT HE HADN'T HAD ANY DIRECT RELATIONSHIP IN MONTHS BUT THAT HE WAS PERFECTLY WILLING TO TALK TO HIM IF IT WOULD GET ANYWHERE.

11. FRANGIE. FRANGIE AS DID THE OTHERS HAD COMMENTS ON MY ANALYSIS OF WHAT I THOUGHT I HAD FOUND. HE TROTTED OUT A WHOLE SERIES OF STATISTICS TO SHOW THAT PRACTICALLY ALL OF THE BUDGET OF LEBANON IS SPENT TO HELP THE POOR PEOPLES AND THIS MEANS THE MOSLEMS. I TOLD HIM THAT I KNEW THESE STATISTICS. WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DESCRIBE TO HIM WAS A BELIEF OF THE PEOPLE AND THAT STRONGLY-HELD BELIEFS ARE OFTEN MUCH STRONGER THAN STATISTICS. FRANGIE IS SKEPTICAL AS TO WHETHER THE JOINT COMMISSION CAN BE ESTABLISHED BUT IS QUITE WILLING FOR MARONITE FORCES TO TAKE A PART IN IT. I SAID THE ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT IS TO TRY AND THAT HE MUST AGREE WITH MM, AS HE DID, THAT IT IS VITAL TO PUT AN END TO THE GANGS WHICH ARE TORMENTING THE CITY. AS FOR THE CONSORTIUM IDEA HE AGREED COMPLETELY THAT IT COULD SERVE AS A SIGN OF HOPE FOR THE PEOPLE WHO COULD SAY TO THEMSELVES THAT THE NEW TASK IS RECONSTRUCTION IN WHICH THE WORLD IS HELPING.

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12. AT ONE MOMENT HE SAID THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. WE ARE SICK AND WE CANNOT TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES. WE NEED GOOD DOCTORS, FRIENDLY ONE TO COME AND EXAMINE THE CAUSES OF THE SICKNESS AND PROVIDE THE REMEDIES. THEY HAVE TO HAVE THE BEST INTEREST OF LEBANON AT HEART.

13. HE SAID THAT THE SYRIANS WERE THE

ONLY ONES TO OFFER MEDIATION. HE HAD ESTABLISHED PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH ASAD WHEREIN THEY HAD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN EACH OTHER. IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE OF THIS HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT THAT MEDIATION. THIS PERSONAL CONTACT WILL BE LOST WHEN HE LEAVES OFFICE. THE SYRAIN REGIME IS ALWAYS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. LEBANON CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT COUNT ON LONG DURATION OF SYRIAN EFFORT. IT SHOULD BE BACKED BY WESTERN COUNTRIES.

14. I TOLD HIM THAT I UNDERSTOOD HIS POINT. IF SYRIA IS NOT IN THE ACT FROM THE BEGINNING, THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE FOR WHAT I HAD PROPOSED. WHILE IT COULD BE TRUE THAT THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS BASED ON THE TRUST THEIR PRESIDENTS HAVE IN EACH OTHER, A CONSORTIUM WITH SYRAIN PARTICIPATION COULD TRANSFORM THAT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP INTO SOMETHING MORE FORMAL AND A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR SYRAIN GOVT WOULD FIND ITSELF INVOLVED IN AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT. WHILE I COULD NOT GIVE HIM ANY GUARANTEES I THOUGHT THESE CONSIDERATIONS MIGHT EASE HIS MIND ABOUT THE FUTURE.

14. FRANGIE REPLIED THAT HE WANTED ME TO KNOW THAT HE WOULD USE ALL HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ASAD TO EASE ANY POSSIBLE SYRIANS SENSITIVITY.

15. WE RUND TO A POSSIBLE COMPOSITION OF A CONSORTIUM. FRANGIE SAID HE WOULD PREFER IT TO BE WESTERN BUT THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE VALUE OF HAVING ARABS IN IT FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, TO TAKE CARE OF SYRIAN SENSIBILITIES AND SECOND TO
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GET ACCESS TO ARAB FUNDS. HE WOULD LIKE THE SYRIANS, JORDANIANS AND SAUDIS IN THE CONSORTIUM. HE DID NOT WANT ARAB COUNTRIES (E.G., IRAQ OR LIBYA) WHO HE CLAIMED WERE INVOLVED IN THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OF LEBANON.

16. HE

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FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

16. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY IT WAS A QUESTION OF HOW TO APPROACH THE SYRIANS. WHO? CERTAINLY NOT THE PRIME MINISTER WHO WAS ANTI-WESTERN BUT WHO WOULD IN THE END GO ALONG IF THE SYRIANS APPROVED. HE SAID THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR SHOULD DO IT.

17. I ENTERED AGAIN TO REMIND HIM THAT I WAS ONLY TALKING ABOUT A PRIVATE IDEA AND THAT I WOULD REPORT ALL OF OUR CONVERSATION TO MY GOVT BUT I COULD NOT TAKE ON ANY COMMITMENTS AT THIS TIME. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD.

18. HE TOLD ME THAT IN ONE OF HIS EARLIER TALKS WITH THE SYRIANS, THE SYRIANS TOLD HIM THAT THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE THE US PLAY A ROLE IN THE MEDIATION EFFORT IF THERE WAS SOME SORT OF UN APPROVAL. WHILE THIS DID NOT APPLY DIRECTLY TO WHAT WE WERE DISCUSSING, HE THOUGHT IT WAS A HOPEFUL SIGN. HE SAID AGAIN THAT HE WOULD DO ALL POSSIBLE IN TALK WITH PRES ADAD.

19. WE THEN TURNED TO A POSSIBLE AGENDA OF ACTION. AFTER MUCH TO AND FROM THIS IS WHAT HE THINKS IS GOOD: (A) GET THE AGREEMENT OF THE US; (B) SOMEONE TALK TO SYRIA; (C) THE US TALK TO FRANCE, OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES AND KING KHALED; (D) GET THE NEW
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PRESIDENT SOLIDLY ON BOARD AND SET UP THE MECHANISM BY WHICH THE REQUEST WOULD BE MADE.

20. FRANGIE SAID SADLY IF THIS FAILS THEN THE ONLY RECOURSE WILL BE SYRIAN INTERVENTION. HE ASKED IF I THOUGHT IF THE CONSORTIUM WORKED WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR FURTHER SYRIAN FORCES TO ENTER THE COUNTRY AS A PART OF THE CONSORTIUM'S EFFORT TO REBUILD THE LEBANESE ARMY. PERHAPS THIS WOULD BE ONE WAY TO ASSURE THE ISRAELIS.

21. LUCIEN DAHDAH INTERJECTED TO SAY THAT ALL THE ABOVE REALLY DEPENDED ON WHETHER THERE COULD BE SECURITY IN THE INTERIM. FRANGIE SAID THERE IS A REAL PROBLEM HERE BECAUSE LARGE NUMBERS OF THE DEPUTIES, FORTY HE ESTIMATED, WERE IN DISTRICTS UNDER PALESTINIAN DOMINATION. THIS INCLUDES KARAME AND KAMEL AL-ASSAD. THAT'S ONE PROBLEM. THE OTHER IS THAT MANY ARE AFRAID TO PUT THEMSELVES UNDER THE PROTECTION OF SAIQA. THE GENERAL QUESTION IS TO MAKE SURE THE ELECTION IN PARLIAMENT IS FREE. IF IT LOOKS LIKE IT IS FORCED IN ANY WAY ON THE DEPUTIES BY NON-LEBANESE EITHER SYRIAN OR PALESTINIAN THEN "THE REVOLUTION WILL CHANGE SIDES AND PARTITION WILL FOLLOW".

22. HE THOUGHT IT ESSENTIAL FOR THE MARONITES TO AGREE ON ONE CANDIDATE AND NOT TO PROVIDE A DIVIDED FRONT. IF THIS IS DONE AND THERE IS SECURITY, EVENTUALLY THE OTHER PARLIAMENTARIANS WILL FOLLOW. HE PLANS TO MEET TODAY WITH OTHER MARONITE LEADERS ON THIS SUBJECT.

23. THEN CAME THE FIRST PROBLEM. FRANGIE SAID THAT A MIXED COMMISSION COULD PROBABLY BE SET UP IN 48 HOURS. IT WOULD MEAN MAKING SURE OF JUMBLATT, GEMAYEL AND CHAMOUN. THE MIXED COMMISSION WILL HAVE TO USE FORCE AND THIS MUST BE UNDERSTOOD. NEGOTIATION WITH LAWLESS BANDS WON'T WORK. BUT THE FIRST TASK OF THE MIXED COMMISSION WOULD BE TO DEAL WITH THAT AND BY SO DOING SHOW PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY
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THE DEPUTIES, THAT SECURITY CAN BE PROVIDED FOR THE PARLIAMENT. HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD DELAY THINGS AND STRESSED IN ANY CASE INASMUCH AS NO CONSENSUS ON ANY CANDIDATE HAS EMERGED, THE LEBANESE COULD NOT PROCEED AS FAST AS I HAD TOLD HIM THEY SHOULD. THE SECOND PROBLEM RAISED BY FRANGIE CAME UP TOWARDS THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION. HE ASKED HOW HE COULD GET SOME ARMS FAST TO THE LEBANESE ARMY. I ASKED HIM WHAT LEBANESE ARMY. HE SAID SOLDIERS

ARE BEGINNING TO DRIFT BACK ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LINE. HE THOUGHT AT A MAXIMUM 4-5,000 MEMBERS OF THE ARMY WERE RECUPERABLE, HALF CHRISTIAN, HALF MOSLEM. IF ARMED AND WELL-OFFICERED THEY COULD PROVIDE A REAL FORCE WITHIN A RELATIVES SHORT TIME. I TOLD HIM THIS WAS A BIG PROBLEM BUT THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS REQUEST. AS WE ENDED OUR CONVERSATION, FRANGIE SAID HE ACCEPTED THE TWO SUGGESTIONS I HAD MADE WITHOUT RESERVE. HE BELIEVES THAT THERE MUST BE TWO GUARANTEES TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY TRANQUILITY OF MIND FOR THE FUTURE. FIRST IS THAT THE REGIME IN ITS PRESENT FORM--EVEN WITH REFORMS WHICH HE HIMSELF WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE MUST SURVIVE. THE LEBANESE PEOPLE WANT THE DEMOCRACY THEY HAVE. SECOND IS THAT THE LEBANON, CREATED AS A COUNTRY WHERE MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS, HAS ALSO TO BE MAINTAINED. THE CHRISTIANS NEED GUARANTEES IN THE FUTURE THAT THEY BE ABLE TO LIVE LIKE THEY HAVE ALWAYS LIVED AND THAT THEY NOT BECOME SECOND RATE CITIZENS AS THEY ARE IN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANS ARE ONLY TOLERATED.

24. CHAMOUN. CHAMOUN WAS ANOTHER CASE. HE HEARD ME OUT ON AND THEN SAID HE WANTED ME TO KNOW ONE THING WHICH HE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO SAY IN FRONT OF FRANGIE THE OTHER DAY. THE AIM OF THE SYRIANS IS TO BUILD A STATE IN LEBANON WHICH IS 100 PERCENT HOSTILE TO ISRAEL. THE MARONITES WILL NEVER FIGHT THE ISRAELIS. THEY HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. THEY ARE TWO MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE

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EAST. THEY SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO PRESERVE THEMSELVES AND IF THE WEST WAS REALLY ASTUTE, IT WOULD ACCEPT THIS AND HELP THEM BOTH. IN LEBANON THIS MEANT CONFEDERATION WHERE TWO COMMUNITIES COULD BE UNDER ONE FLAG BUT MAINTAIN THEIR SEPARATE RIGHTS. PROPOSALS I HAD MADE ARE SHORT TERM. THEY WILL ONLY LEAD TO ANOTHER WAR IN A FEW YEARS. THE CONSORTIUM COULD BE HELPFUL IF IT HAD ON ITS TASK SETTING UP THE CONFEDERATION.

25. I TOLD HIM THAT IN ALL HONESTY, I THOUGHT HIS PROPOSAL WAS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE ONE. THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE TO FIND THEIR SECURITY IN OTHER WAYS. CONFEDERATION AS HE PROPOSED IT IS ONLY PARTITION. I ASKED HIM TO THINK THIS OVER AGAIN AND TO ASK HIMSELF IF WHAT HE PROPOSED WAS

REALLY THE DESIRE OF THE MARONITE AND CHRISTIAN
PEOPLE.

26. MALIK. MALIK IS ENTHUSIASTIC. SEES PROBLEMS
AS WOULD ANY LEBANESE AND WILL TALK TO HIS
CHRISTIAN BROTHERS ABOUT IT.

27. MONKS. ARE ACKNOWLEDGED AS IMPORTANT ELE-
MENT IN THE MARONITE COMMUNITY. THEY HAVE BEEN
STUDYING THE FUTURE FOR THE PAST YEAR AND GAVE ME
THE WHOLE LOF OF REFORM PROPOSALS BOTH POLITICAL
AND ECONOMIC WHICH I PROMISED TO STUDY. THE LEADERS
TOLD ME PRIVATELY SEVERAL TIMES THAT WE WOULD GET
NOWHERE WITH CHAMOUN BUT THAT THEY WOULD WORK ON
BOTH FRANGIE AND GEMAYEL AND ON OTHER IMPORTANT
LEVERS IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. THEY ARE VERY
FEARFUL OF THE EVENTUAL ISLAMIZATION OF LEBANON
WITH THE CHRISTIANS IN INFERIOR POSITIONS.

28. IT HAS BEEN A LONG DAY. I APOLOGIZE FOR
THE LENGTHH OF THIS BUT I WANTED TO GET THEIR THINKING
FIRST HAND. I WILL COMMENT LATER.
BROWN

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